DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 719 JC 750 389

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Eagle, Norman; And Others |
| TITLE | An Assessment of the 1970 Revision of the Liberal Arts Curriculum. |
| INSTITUTION | Bronx Community Coll., N.Y. |
| REPORT NO | BCC-3-73 |
| PUB DATE | Oct 73 |
| NOTE | 30p. |
| EDRS PRICE | MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 PLUS POSTAGE |
| DESCRIPTORS | Academic Achievement; *Core Courses; *Curriculum Problems; Degree Requirements; Elective Subjects; *Graduation Requirements; *Junior Colleges; *Liberal Arts; Liberal Arts Majors; Program Content; School Holding Power; Student Opinion |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Bronx Community College |

ABSTRACT

In fall 1970, the liberal arts curriculum at Bronx Community College (New York) was revised to provide more flexibility for student program structuring. Analyses of cumulative student progress data for pre- and post-revision students indicate that the revision was successful in increasing persistence and graduation rates; it also seems to have led to higher student GPA's and fewer credits earned. An opinion survey sent to 200 liberal arts faculty members who had been at BCC continuously since fall 1968 yielded 46 responses. In general, faculty respondents felt that the revisions had weakened the structure and academic content of the curriculum; student motivation had not increased and the elimination of prerequisites allowed a higher proportion of inadequately prepared students into the courses. A survey sent to students who had entered the liberal arts program in fall 1968 and who had continued to attend after fall 1970 indicated that the new flexibility operated mainly by enabling students to avoid taking unwanted courses rather than by enabling them to experiment in new areas. A large proportion of the respondents felt that they had not been sufficiently informed of the opportunities opened up by the revisions and had not been assisted in making use of the revisions in program planning. (DC)

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# Research Report

## BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
of THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

BCC 3-73

# An Assessment of the 1970 Revision of the Liberal Arts Curriculum

October, 1973

Office of Institutional Research

Dr. Norman Eagle, Coordinator
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JC 750 879

# An Assessment of the 1970 Revision of the Liberal Arts Curriculum

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Preface

In 1971, a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, called the Committee on Long Range Revision of the Liberal Arts Curriculum, recommended that an evaluation be carried out of the impact of the changes made in the liberal arts curriculum in the fall of 1970. One recommendation of the Long Range Revision Committee was that a special committee be set up to plan such an evaluation. On November 30, 1971 the Subcommittee on the Evaluation of the Liberal Arts Revision was formed to deal with the problem and, after a series of several conferences with the Office of Institutional Research, the study here reported was designed.

The Subcommittee, which gave generously of its time, consisted of Professors H. Jick, M. Kalin, M. Kanuck, J. Kolliner, and A. Lande. We wish to thank these colleagues for their guidance, suggestions, and insights.

An Assessment of the 1970 Revision of the Liberal Arts Curriculum

This study was undertaken to assess some of the effects of the revision of the liberal arts curriculum introduced at B.C.C. in the fall of 1970. As stated by Professor Jean Kolliner, Chairman of the Curriculum Committee's Subcommittee on Evaluation of the Liberal Arts Curriculum, the 1970 revision was aimed at making the liberal arts curriculum less restrictive, and at providing increased options and freedom to liberal arts students in structuring their programs. The basic assumption behind the revision was that greater flexibility would increase the holding power of the liberal arts curriculum as indicated by higher retention, or lower attrition, rates. It was also hypothesized that the two year graduation rate in the liberal arts curriculum would be positively affected. The study is divided into two parts: Part A will compare pre-revision and post-revision liberal arts students on several criteria, while Part B will report on student and faculty experience and opinion.

## Part A

This part of the study was based on a comparison between pre-and-post revision groups. The pre-revision group consisted of all freshmen entering the liberal arts program at B.C.C. in the fall of 1968, while students entering the liberal arts program in the fall of 1970 formed the post-revision group. For both groups criteria data were collected at the end of two years (June, 1970 and June, 1972 respectively).

To make the two groups more comparable, all students with a high school average below 70 were excluded from the post-revision group, thus eliminating to some extent the effect of open admissions. Moreover, in a covariance analysis, an effort was made to reduce the differences in academic ability of students in the two groups by exercising a covariate control on high school average. To facilitate a meaningful comparison between the pre-and post-revision groups the two groups were divided into five categories as follows:

1) Graduates: Students who had earned 64 or more credits and had a cumulative index of at least 1.96 at the end of two years, were considered graduates for the purpose of this study.

2) High Persistors: Includes all students who had earned less than 64 credits, had an index of 1.96 or above, and who continued to be enrolled in the liberal arts program after two years.

3) Low Persistors: Comprise those students who had earned less than 64 credits, had an index lower than 1.96, and who were still continuing in the liberal arts program after two years.

4) High Dropouts: Includes all students who had left B.C.C. by the end of the second year with an index of 1.96 or above.

5) Low Dropouts: Includes students who had left B.C.C. by the end of the second year with an index below 1.96.

For the covariance analysis, the pre-and post-revision groups were compared across the different categories on the number of credits earned and cumulative index attained at the end of the two year period.

## FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the proportions of each category of student in the two comparison groups. The significance of the differences in the proportions of these five categories between the two groups was tested by a chi square analysis. The overall differences between the two groups was found to be highley significant ( $<$ .001 level). That is to say, the patterns of proportions for the two groups was not identical.

Table 1 Retention Patterns for Pre-and Post-Revision Students

| Student Categories | Pre-revision 1968 - 1970 | | Post-revision 1970 - 1972 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N |
| Graduates | 11.4 | 26 | 13.4 | 51 |
| High Persistors | 16.6 | 38 | 28.6 | 109 |
| Low Persistors | 3.9 | 9 | 12.6 | 48 |
| High Dropouts | 58.1 | 133 | 30.9 | 118 |
| Low Dropouts | 10.0 | 23 | 14.7 | 56 |
| Total | 100.0 | 229 | 100.2 | 382 |

Examining the individual categories we find that, while not dramatically different, the post-revision group shows a higher proportion of graduates than the pre-revision group.

The diferences in the proportions for both high and low persistors were significant at the .05 level, and in both cases there were larger proportions of persistors in the post-revision group.

High dropouts show a reverse trend. We find the post revision group had a significantly smaller proportion of high dropouts than the pre-revision group. On the other hand, there was a larger proportion of low dropouts in the post-revision group than in the pre-revision group. However, this latter difference

was not found to be statistically significant.

The higher percentage of graduates and persistors and the lower rate of abler (high) dropouts in the post-revision period as compared to the pre-revision period, strongly suggest that the graduating and holding power of the liberal arts curriculum during this period was somewhat higher than during the pre-revision period. Since the 1970 revision was an important factor differentiating the liberal arts curriculum during the two periods, there is some support for the contention that the revision has contributed to the better performance of students during the post-revision period. At the same time it must be recognized that the improved graduation and retention rates during the post-revision period could have been caused by other factors as well. One does not know in which other respects the two groups may have differed, thereby possibly disposing one group to a higher graduating and retention rate as compared to the other.

Cumulative Index and Credits Earned at End of Two Years

For this part of the study the five categories: graduates, high persistors, low persistors, high dropouts, and low dropouts in the pre-and post-revision groups, were compared on the cumulative index and the number of credits

earned at the end of two years.[1] In order to achieve a better comparability between the two comparison groups, an effort was made to minimize the initial differences in the level of academic ability of the two groups. This was done by exercising a covariate control on high school average and then comparing the two groups over five categories on the adjusted means of cumulative index and number of credits earned. It may be mentioned here that despite the exclusion of students with a high school average below 70, the mean high school average of the pre-revision group in all the five categories was significantly higher ($< .01$) than that of the post-revision group. Thus the necessity to exercise covariate control on high school average before making any comparisons between the two groups.

## FINDINGS

### Graduates

| Groups | N | Total Credits Earned | | Cumulative Index | | High School Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unadjusted Means | Adjusted Means | Unadjusted Means | Adjusted Means | Means |
| Pre-revision | 26 | 70.2 | 69.6 | 2.46 | 2.3 | 80.2 |
| Post-revision | 51 | 66.0 | 66.3 | 2.58 | 2.7 | 74.7 |
| Level of significance | | $< 01$ | $< .01$ | n.s. | $< .01$ | $< .01$ |

[1] See page 2 for category definitions.

The above table shows that, despite their lower high school average, post-revision graduates had a significantly higher cumulative index than pre-revision graduates. While it is not possible to definitely attribute this to the revisions made in the liberal arts curriculum, the two events do have a statistical association, and the findings are encouraging. The post facto design and the possibility of the existence of unknown differences between the groups related to the criterion, precludes a more definitive analysis.

With regard to cumulative credits earned we find that the pre-revision students in this category earned an average of about four credits more than students in the post-revision group. While the nature of the study makes it difficult to interpret this difference, it must be remembered that the high school average of the post revision group was significantly lower than that for the pre-revision group, so that more of the post revision students may have been required to spend some time at pre-college level work during the two year period at B.C.C., in comparison to the pre-revision students.

High Persistors

| Groups | N | Total Credits Earned | | Cumulative Index | | High School Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unadjusted Mean | Adjusted Mean | Unadjusted Mean | Adjusted Mean | Mean |
| Pre-Revision | 38 | 51.93 | 51.6 | 2.32 | 2.3 | 79.4 |
| Post-Revision | 109 | 44.12 | 44.2 | 2.51 | 2.5 | 74.3 |
| Level of Significance | | < .01 | < .05 | < .01 | < .01 | < .01 |

Displaying a performance profile similar to that of the "graduates", high persistors in the post-revision period had a lower mean high school average and fewer credits, but they earned a significantly better index than the high persistors in the pre-revision group. The difference between the groups in total credits earned is somewhat greater among high persistors, than among graduates. On the other hand, the difference in cumulative index is somewhat narrower than among the graduates, reflecting a .2 lowering in the index on the part of the post revision group. The high school averages for the graduates and high persistors are seen to be almost identical.

Low Persistors

| Groups | N | Total Credits Earned | | Cumulative Index | | High School Average Means |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unadjusted Means | Adjusted Means | Unadjusted Means | Adjusted Means | |
| Pre-Revision | 9 | 36.9 | 32.0 | 1.30 | 1.2 | 79.9 |
| Post-Revision | 48 | 35.9 | 36.7 | 1.56 | 1.6 | 73.0 |
| Level of Significance | | n.s. | n.s. | n.s. | $<.05$ | $<.01$ |

No significant difference between the two comparison groups was found in the number of total credits earned by low persistors. Low persistors during the pre-rivision period did average one credit more than the low persistors during the post-revision period. However, when these means of total credits earned are adjusted for the differences in high school averages of the two comparison groups, there is a tendency for the post revision group to show superiority, though this tendency is not statistically significant.

Low persistors during the post-revision period show a better cumulative index than low persistors of the pre-revision period. This difference, though not significant when unadjusted means are compared, becomes significant when adjustments for unequal high school averages are made. Again it is seen that, despite their lower high school averages, low persistors in the post-revision group earned a higher mean index than their counterparts in the pre-revision group.

The above interpretations must be viewed in the light of the extremely small number (9) of pre-revision low persistors.

High Dropouts

| Groups | N | Total Credits Earned | | Cumulative Index | | High School Average Means |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unadjusted Means | Adjusted Means | Unadjusted Means | Adjusted Means | |
| Pre-Revision | 133 | 51.1 | 51.1 | 2.71 | 2.6 | 80.9 |
| Post-Revision | 118 | 36.2 | 36.1 | 2.65 | 2.7 | 75.0 |
| Level of Significance | | < .01 | < .01 | n.s. | n.s. | < .01 |

The above table indicates that high dropouts during the pre-revision period earned significantly more credits at the time of their departure than high dropouts in the post-revision period. Independent research evidence suggests that high dropouts were very likely to have transferred to a four year college. Hence, the difference in total credits earned by high dropouts during the pre- and post-revision periods may reflect the more favorable C.U.N.Y. transfer of credit rules which existed during the post revision period as compared

to the pre-revision period. These new transfer conditions may have encouraged high dropout students to transfer to four year colleges earlier than during the pre-revision period, resulting in a lower total credits earned at B.C.C.

Despite the statistical adjustment of mean cumulative index for the difference in high school average, no significant difference is seen to result. With one exception, no substantial difference in absolute level of index or high school average is seen, in comparisons among graduates, high persistors, and high dropouts. The exception indicates that pre-revision high dropouts earned higher indices than the pre-revision graduates and high persistors, suggesting the notion that "better" students had tended to drop out (transfer). This phenomenon is not seen in the post-revision period, again suggesting the possibility that more "better" students are remaining longer at BCC since the liberal arts curriculum revisions were instituted. (See, also, table for High Persistors.)

Low Dropouts

| Groups | N | Total Credits Earned | | Cumulative Index | | High School Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Unadjusted Mean | Adjusted Mean | Unadjusted Mean | Adjusted Mean | Mean |
| Pre-Revision | 23 | 29.3 | 27.0 | 1.28 | 1.3 | 78.6 |
| Post-Revision | 59 | 17.5 | 18.4 | 1.28 | 1.3 | 73.9 |
| Level of Significance | | $<.01$ | n.s. | n.s. | n.s. | $<.01$ |

From the above table it is seen that although pre-revision Low Dropouts had a clear tendency to earn more credits before leaving than post-revision Low Dropouts, the difference is not statistically significant when the difference in high school average is taken into account. However, a tendency for the pre-revision group to earn more credits before dropping out, than the post-revision group, still remains. Cumulative indices appear identical. These non-significant performance differences emerge despite the significant difference between the groups on high school average, where the pre-revision group is again seen to be somewhat superior.

## Part B

This part of the study was based on two questionnaires, one for faculty and another for students. The faculty questionnaire was sent out to about 200 members of teaching departments related to the liberal arts curriculum. Only those faculty members who had been with their departments continously since the fall of 1968 were asked to respond to this questionnaire. Forty-six responses from the faculty were received.[1] The distribution of the responding faculty members over various departments was as follows: English 9, Modern Language 6, History 6, Social Science 5, Biology 5, Chemistry 4, Speech 3, Physics 3, Mathematics 2, Health and Physical Education 2. One respondent did not identify his/her department.

As an aid to interpretation, the responses of faculty members who taught at least one course whose status was changed from required to elective after the revisions (Question No. 1), are shown separately from the responses of those who did not teach such a course.

## CAUTION

In all of the following interpretations of faculty responses it will be necessary to bear in mind that the representativeness of the responding sample of faculty (approximately 25% of the "qualified" faculty population), cannot be determined. It is not known, for example, in what ways the group of respondees differs from the non-respondee group. Generalizations based on responses from the responding group, to the group as a whole are, therefore, not warranted.

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[1] after two solicitations

Question 2. Do you think the revision has allowed you to teach new elective courses which are more akin to your special training and interests?

| Responses | Taught an elective course which was required before revision | | Did not teach an elective course which was required before revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 14.8 | (4) | 16.6 | (3) | 15.6 | (7) |
| 2. No | 59.3 | (16) | 22.2 | (4) | 44.4 | (20) |
| 3. Can't Say | 25.9 | (7) | 61.1 | (11) | 40.0 | (18) |

About 16% of the sample responded favorably to the above question. Of the seven instructors responding positively to the question, three are from social science, one each from History, English, Mathematics, and Health and Physical Education. Of the twenty instructors responding negatively, more than half are from the English and Modern Language departments. A sizeable proportion of respondents (.40) felt they did not have an adequate basis for making a judgement.

Commenting on the question, one respondent said that unpopularity of the discipline (political science) may have made it more difficult to teach electives in it.

Question 3. Have you felt that students taking your course(s) as an elective after the revision, have been better motivated or more interested in their class work than they were during the pre-revision period?

| Responses | Taught an elective course which was required before revision | | Did not teach an elective course which was required before revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 21.4 | (6) | 0 | (0) | 13.3 | (6) |
| 2. No | 53.6 | (15) | 17.6 | (3) | 40.0 | (18) |
| 3. Can't Say | 25.0 | (7) | 82.4 | (14) | 46.6 | (21) |

According to the above table, a minority (21%) of instructors in a position to make a judgement, felt that students attending elective courses now, are better motivated or more interested in their class work than they were before the revision. Open comments on this question support this view. Some of these were: "less prepared and interested ", "less interested than during pre-revision period ", "motivation and interest is O.K. / skills are weaker."

Question 4a. In your opinion has the revision allowed students to devise academic programs which are better suited to their interests?

| Responses | Taught an elective course which was required before revision | | Did not teach an elective course which was required before revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 39.3 | (11) | 38.8 | (7) | 39.1 | (18) |
| 2. No | 21.4 | (6) | 5.6 | (1) | 15.2 | (7) |
| 3. Can't Say | 39.3 | (11) | 55.6 | (10) | 45.6 | (21) |

About 39% of the respondents agreed that the revision has allowed students to devise academic programs which are better suited to their interests. However, in the open comments some misgivings were expressed regarding the meaning of the phrase "their interests." One comment was, "perhaps to their interests but not necessarily to their welfare."

Question 4b In your opinion has the revision allowed students to devise academic programs which allow for greater opportunities to shape their educational goals?

| Responses | Taught an elective course which was required before revision | | Did not teach an elective course which was required before revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 46.4 | (13) | 44.4 | (8) | 45.6 | (21) |
| 2. No | 17.8 | (5) | 11.1 | (2) | 15.2 | (7) |
| 3. Can't Say | 35.7 | (10) | 44.4 | (8) | 39.1 | (18) |

A larger proportion of respondents (about 46% as compared to 39% for the previous related question) agreed that the revision allows students greater opportunities to shape their educational goals. However, there were some doubts as to whether "students have better guidance or more knowledge of what their opportunities are." Another faculty member commented, "students may not be farsighted about goals and may be attracted to expedience."

Question 5 If, since the revision, you have taught a course whose prerequisite was abolished by the revision, do you think the elimination of the prerequisite has allowed a higher proportion of inadequately prepared students into the course?

| Responses | Taught an elective course which was required before revision | | Did not teach an elective course which was required before revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 58.3 | (7) | 50.0 | (1) | 57.1 | (8) |
| 2. No | 16.7 | (2) | 50.0 | (1) | 21.4 | (3) |
| 3. Can't Say | 25.0 | (3) | 0 | (0) | 21.4 | (3) |

A majority of the responding faculty members felt that the abolition of pre-requisites had allowed a higher proportion of inadequately prepared students into courses whose prerequisites were abolished. The reliability and interpretability of this finding, however, is somewhat clouded by the small group size and the possibility that some judgements may have been affected by the presence of "open admissions" students in these courses. In open comments, a particular exception was taken to the abolition of prerequisites in History and English.[1]

Question 6 Do you see any negative or other positive effects of the revision? (while this was an open-ended question, an attempt has been made to score the responses on the basis of their overall direction, as shown below.)

| Responses | Taught elective course which was required before revision | | Did not teach an elective course which was required before revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Positive | 26.6 | (4) | 25.0 | (1) | 26.3 | (5) |
| 2. Negative | 73.3 | (11) | 50.0 | (2) | 68.4 | (13) |
| 3. Both negative & positive | 0 | 0 | 25.0 | (1) | 5.3 | (1) |

Bearing in mind the small sample size, the above table tends to show that a majority of the responding faculty feels that the negative effects of the revision override the positive effects. In general, the revision was seen to have weakened the structure and academic content in the liberal arts program. Abolition of some of the pre-requisites, particularly in English and History, was the most common target of criticism.

1 The original design of this study called for a comparison of grades in certain advanced English and History courses, between students who had, and did not have, the prerequisites as they existed before the revision. This had to be abandoned because of the inaccessability of some of the required data.

Some of the faculty comments took the following forms:

> "Students were no longer exposed to 'Qualification Tests' of the pre-requisite and thus were somewhat unprepared".
>
> "The elimination of the prerequisite has definitely allowed a higher proportion of inadequately prepared students into courses".
>
> "Elimination of English prerequisites has led to lower standards of reading, writing, and cultural alertness. Our cultural programs have suffered in consequence."
>
> "English forms the base of other subject areas, hence two semesters of English are necessary."
>
> "One semester of History is not enough!"
>
> "(Revision) weakens knowledge of foreign languages, so very necessary for U.S.A."
>
> "Decreasing the required courses in the foreign language sequence, has severely hindered the students' ability to acquire a working (speaking) knowledge of a foreign language."

More liberalized rules for fulfilling core requirements and opening up of several new elective courses were also subjected to criticism. One respondent commented that the revision allowed students to avoid certain requirements which 'may later become a detriment at four year colleges." Other comments included the following:

> "Proliferation of courses opens up wider vistas for students but it also confuses them."
>
> "Students may be less well educated in some respects since there are important disciplines which they can avoid."
>
> "Students tend to avoid English courses with a writing component."

The positive effects of the revision were seen mainly in the greater flexibility of the curriculum and in increased self-motivation of students. One instructor commented, "Students who take a course whose status has changed from required to elective are likely to have taken the course because they are interested in it. Thus, a more stimulating class environment is created." Another respondent stated that the revision provides "better students in Language 21, 22, 23."

Only four faculty members responded to the 7th question which asked for "other general comments." One significant comment was, "not enough work in oral communication at a time when oral communication is becoming increasingly important, specifically with the increased importance of TV." Another respondent complained about the difficulty of excluding "open admissions" students from consideration while answering this questionnaire.

Student Perception of the Impact of the Liberal Arts Curriculum Revision

Student questionnaires were sent out to 250 students who had entered the liberal arts program at BCC in the fall of 1968. These students were instructed to fill out the questionnaire only if they had continued to attend BCC after the fall of 1970. This was to ensure that only those students who had been exposed to the liberal arts curriculum both before and after the revision should

respond to the questionnaire. Of the 250 envelopes sent out, 76 were returned undelivered, mainly because the students had moved from the given addresses. One hundred and two students returned the questionnaire, for a response rate of 59%. Of these, 70 said that they had left B.C.C. before the fall of 1970. This left only 32 students to serve as the basis for this part of the study. [1]

The responses of students who remember at least some of the changes brought about by the revision in the fall of 1970 are shown separately from the responses of those who do not remember any of these changes (based on responses to question No. 2). Of the 32 respondents, only 19 remember some of these changes. Although the responses of the remaining 13 students are being reported here, they should be interpreted with caution, because without a prior knowledge of the changes, it is difficult for these students to respond meaningfully to questions aimed at measuring their perception of the impact of the revision on their program of studies at B.C.C.

The note of caution which preceded the analysis of faculty responses is invoked here as well. While almost 60% of the contacted students replied, one cannot say that the responding group is representative of the larger population of students from which the effective sample has been drawn. The relatively small sample size should also be borne in mind as interpretations are formulated.

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[1] non responding students received a follow up questionnaire after two weeks.

Question 3a: As a result of the changes in the liberal arts curriculum in the fall of 1970, were you able to take, or will you take, any course which you might not have been able to take under the older (before Fall'70) liberal arts curriculum requirements?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 26.3 | (5) | 0 | (0) | 15.6 | (5) |
| 2. No | 47.4 | (9) | 53.8 | (7) | 50.0 | (16) |
| 3. Can't Say | 26.3 | (5) | 46.2 | (6) | 34.4 | (11) |

Of those who remember some of the changes introduced by the revision only 26% say that the revision afforded them an opportunity to take a course which they could not have taken before the revision. The reasons for this are not known. Perhaps students are anxious about straying too far from their curriculum areas, or perhaps elective offerings were inappropriate or insufficient.

Question 3b: Have you been able to avoid taking a course which you would have been required to take under the old liberal arts curriculum?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 38.9 | (7) | 7.7 | (1) | 25.0 | (8) |
| 2. No | 38.9 | (7) | 38.5 | (5) | 37.5 | (12) |
| 3. Can't Say | 22.2 | (4) | 53.8 | (7) | 37.5 | (12) |

A significantly larger proportion of students (39%) could avoid taking a course, after the revision, which they would have been required to take prior to the revision.

It would seem, therefore, that liberalization of core requirements and the abolition of certain prerequisites gave students somewhat greater freedom to take courses of their choice. However, as the responses to the previous question indicated, their exercise of this choice was characterized more by an avoidance of unwanted courses, rather than by an experimentation with new courses, though the latter did occur to some extent.

Question 3c: Have the elective courses that you could take as a result of the changes in the liberal arts curriculum helped you attain your educational goals or prepare you better for your career?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 47.4 | (9) | 0 | (0) | 28.1 | (9) |
| 2. No | 26.3 | (5) | 15.4 | (2) | 21.9 | (7) |
| 3. Can't Say | 26.3 | (5) | 84.6 | (11) | 50.0 | (16) |

The new elective courses introduced as a result of the revision may not have provided many attractive choices (question 3a) but a significant proportion of students (47%) agree that the new electives did help them attain their educational goals or prepare them better for their careers.

Question 5a: If you were attending B.C.C. when the changes were made in the liberal arts curriculum (fall of 1970), did a C.A.P. advisor discuss them with you at that time?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 21.1 | (4) | 8.3 | (1) | 16.1 | (5) |
| 2. No | 78.9 | (15) | 83.3 | (10) | 80.6 | (25) |
| 3. Can't Say | 0 | (0) | 8.3 | (1) | 3.2 | (1) |

Question 5b: If "yes" did the C.A.P. advisor call you, or did you go to the advisor?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| C.A.P. advisor called | 0 | (0) | 0 | (0) | 0 | (0) |
| I contacted C.A.P. advisor | 100 | (4) | 100 | (2) | 100 | (6) |

The responses to the previous two questions suggest the possibility that C.A.P. advisors did not succeed in communicating the content of the revisions to the students, when the revisions became effective. This may also explain why 41% of the responding students do not remember any of the changes introduced by the revision. The poor and incomplete knowledge of the changes introduced into the curriculum may have hindered students from making a full or adequate use of the changes.

Question 5c: Since the changes went into effect (fall 1970) were you ever sufficiently informed of these changes?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 38.9 | (7) | 10.0 | (1) | 28.6 | (8) |
| 2. No | 55.5 | (10) | 80.0 | (8) | 64.3 | (18) |
| 3. Can't Say | 5.6 | (1) | 10.0 | (1) | 7.1 | (2) |

Question 5d: Have you ever been helped by anyone to make use of the changes in planning your program?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 21.1 | (4) | 8.3 | (1) | 16.1 | (5) |
| 2. No | 78.9 | (15) | 91.7 | (11) | 83.9 | (26) |

The responses to questions 5c and 5d suggest that while almost 30% of all students say they were sufficiently informed of the changes (by one means or another), only about half of these (16%) say they were helped...to make use of the changes.

The findings relative to dissemination and ulitization, if generalizable, could seriously affect this evaluation for, if more than 75% of the liberal arts students were not helped to make adequate use of the changes, this study can, at best, illuminate only a small part of the possible impact of the revision on liberal arts students.

Question 6: Are you satisfied with the present liberal arts curriculum?

| Responses | Those who remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Those who do not remember the changes introduced by the revision | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 1. Yes | 27.8 | (5) | 36.4 | (4) | 31.0 | (9) |
| 2. No | 11.1 | (2) | 9.1 | (1) | 10.3 | (3) |
| 3. Can't Say | 61.1 | (11) | 54.5 | (6) | 58.6 | (17) |

Although only 10% of all the responding students say that they are dissatisfied with the present liberal arts curriculum, the proportion of those who say they are satisfied with the present curriculum is also not very large (31%). However, these statistics are heavily influenced by the large proportion of students who could not give an opinion (59%).

Some of the reasons for student dissatisfaction with the curriculum and the kinds of changes recommended by students come out in response to the open-ended question 7: "What changes if any, would you recommend in the liberal arts curriculum?"

Some of these student recommendations are as follows:

"Core requirements should be less stringent"

"Reduce the number of required courses. For example eliminate history and language requirements."

"More alternatives should be available."

More electives in a student's major. More sections of present courses.

Make courses at B.C.C. in line with courses at senior colleges, particularly in regard to the number of credits that each course carries, to facilitate the transfer of non-graduating students.

Difficulty in transferring credits for "Principles of Science", and Music and Art courses.

Prerequisites should be abolished.

Choice of pass/fail grade in at least three or four courser in the program.

Final examination in gym courses should be abolished.

Increase the number of J's allowed to a student.

Introduce more diversity and depth in English courses.

Psych 11 should be a required course for all students, because young people are confused about so many things.

Summary

Comparisons made between pre-revision and post revision liberal arts students on several performance or achievement criteria indicate the following:

a) even when students with high school averages below 70 are eliminated from the post revision group (in order to improve comparability with the pre-revision, pre-open admissions group), significant differences remained. An average of 5 percentage points, in favor of the pre-revision, pre open admissions, group was evident.

b) despite this advantage in favor of the pre-revision group, the two year graduation rate of the post-revision group was slightly higher than the pre-revision group.

c) also despite this advantage in favor of the pre-revision group, the two year persistence rate (inverse attrition) particularly among students with indices above 1.96, was significantly higher for the post-revision group than for the pre-revision group.

d) for graduating students and students remaining at the college for two years (persistors), post-revision students earned significantly higher college indices than pre-revision students.

e) pre-revision students generally showed a tendency to earn more college level credits than post-revision students.

While the general thrust of these findings could be taken to support the notion that the post-revision liberal arts program, in some respects, is working more satisfactorilly than the pre-revision program, one cannot conclude that the revisions per-se have been responsible for this. The post fact design which had to be used precluded the teasing out of a cause-

effect relationship. However, for whatever reasons, the post-revision program does appear to be working better than the pre-revision program on three of the four criteria investigated.

The study also sought, via mailed survey techniques and personal interviews, to elicit observations from students and faculty who were at B.C.C. for at least two years before and one year after the fall, 1970 revision. Unfortunately the small samples generated, and the 25% faculty response, dictate that the following findings be interpreted with caution:

a) while acknowledging that the revisions may have afforded students greater flexibility in shaping programs to their interests and goals, (liberal arts) faculty tend to feel that the revisions weakened the structure and academic content of the liberal arts curriculum.

b) the flexibility intended by the revisions seems to have operated mainly by enabling students to avoid taking unwanted courses rather than by enabling them to experiment in new areas. Despite this, students who offered recommendations for change in the curriculum focused on the further elimination of certain requirements, in favor of wider choice.

c) a large proportion of the responding students report not having been sufficiently informed of the opportunities opened up by the revisions, or not having had assistance in making use of the changes for program planning. The impact of the revisions, therefore, may have been somewhat undercut by this apparent failure to adequately communicate the significance of the changes to the students.

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AUG 1 1975

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October, 1973